

THE WASHINGTON HERALD

DRAMATIC DEPARTMENT.

HECTOR FULLER.

Editor.

PROGRAMME FOR THE WEEK.

The National....."Merry Widow"
The Belasco....."De Wolf Hopper"
Columbia.....Cohan and Harris Minstrels
The Lyceum....."Burlesque"

"Paid in Full." Like many other notable plays and books, owes a great measure of its interest to the action of a single character, an action, performed at the supreme moment, utterly at variance with the character as engendered in the mind by the previous flow of the story. It is the climactic effect obtained by the happening of the unexpected. We see Sidney Carton, after a life of drunkenness, indolence, and debauchery, yielding up his life as an expression of his love for a woman. Jack Rance, the gambler and gentlemanly border ruffian in "The Girl of the Golden West," allows "The Girl" and her lover to go, and his prototype, John Oakhurst, after a riotous life on the frontier, chivalrously dying with a woman of the lowest class, and now we have Capt. Williams, after a career of shrewd ruffianism, full of love living and with suspicions of blood-letting not far removed in degree from murder, recognizing the innate quality of pristine purity in a woman. In the language of the great American game, "It is a good hand to draw to," and is almost always apt to win without benefit of the draw.

But upon analysis what manner of man is he discovered to be, and what excuse can be offered for his being what he was? With his masterful personality and his undoubted intellectual power, could he not have attained his ends without so much browbeating brutality? The characters of such men as Capt. Kidd and Blackbeard are not lovely to contemplate, and fall even in comparison with Byron's Corsair, "the mildest-mannered man that ever scuttled ship or cut a throat."

As a matter of fact, none of the characters in Mr. Walter's drama stand very high up on the plane of intellectuality and normal living, except, perhaps, the placid and far-seeing Smith. His wife was not exactly all right, or she, with the natural intuition of woman, would have foreseen the inevitable results of her own veiled complaints and the open nagging of her relatives, and by halting them at least mitigating the catastrophe. She was a chaste woman, who up to a revolting point loved her husband truly, but beyond that there was not much to her. Of the husband himself, hardly an extenuating thing can be said from beginning to end. Not one flash of true nobility illumined the whole course of his selfishness, petulance, ignorance, utter lack of self-control, and cowardice. We know scores of men who have suffered as much, with perhaps variations, as he did, and yet emerged from the conflict triumphant. Indeed, we believe that the majority of men do it, and hence, to our mind, comes the conviction that he is not a true symbol, there not being enough of the mixed quality of the human species present. Sidney Carton had his intellect, Jack Rance his magnanimity, and Nero his love of flowers, but this man had nothing. The characters of the mother and sister represent the lowest element in human nature—ignorant selfishness. Reverting to Williams, some other remarkable and low things are easily discerned. Why did he seemingly grind this man down? If his shrewdness enabled him so accurately to determine this young man's caliber, benevolence would have prompted him to remove part of the temptation by giving him a living salary, and high business sense would have persuaded him to have discharged him altogether. There seems to be present some part of a devilish disposition to lure the man more quickly to his ruin. In the whole list the character of Smith alone stands out in anything like normal humanity striving toward an ideal.

At the time of witnessing the enactment thereof the play, by reason of its virility, its swift flowing action, and skilful interpretation, attracts profound attention and evokes deep interest, but upon reflection, the composition of the characters involved discloses few of the better traits of the genus homo, and their actions fail to show any clearly beaten traces of the path that leads to human betterment. The vital climax of the play seems to be accomplished under forced draught in making the leading character do what almost any honest man would do under any circumstances.

Louise Gunning.

Most people who went to the Belasco Theater last week realized before the performance of "Marcelle" was half over that they were being offered something exceptionally high class. It does not take one long to appreciate—certainly not after her first song—that Louise Gunning has placed herself at the head of young American prima donna sopranos. It is customary to enthuse over our native talent, and to say of young singers that they have grand voices, and the hyperbolic tendency has worked an injustice to those who are really deserving of recognition. However, Louise Gunning has not attracted public attention to the front, but has steadily come to the front from rather humble beginnings. We first heard of her as a singer of Scotch ballads in the vaudeville houses, where a winsome personality and remarkable vocal ability soon made her a favorite. But, of course, such a singer could never be content amid such surroundings as those. She simply outgrew them and went into comic opera, where she has remained ever since, only to come forth this season as a star.

In "Marcelle" she has been fortunate in securing one of the best comic operas our native writers have produced in years. There is every reason for clashing it with "The Serenade," "Mlle. Modiste," or the standard "Robin Hood." Musically, it is ambitious, Luders having so vastly improved over his former compositions that it seems incredible that he should make a great leap all at once. When we heard his "The Burgomaster," the first of his successes, we had no reason to believe that the composer of the popular jingles and shanty tunes which it contained could ever do anything like "Marcelle," which is dignified and scholarly, and at the same time, as ravishingly melodious as some of the Viennese operettas over which we have lately been so enthusiastic.

It seems a pity that the public should spend its time and money on cheap imitations of comic opera, which have been doctored up with the introduction of coarse and suggestive episodes, and duly

THOSE WITH US.

John Drew (in "Jack Straw") will be the seventh Charles Frohman star to appear at the New National Theater this season.

The Helm children, who will play Chase's March 22 week, have been booked until 1911 by the United Booking Agency.

The last concert by the Boston Symphony Orchestra will be given at the New National Theater Tuesday afternoon, March 16.

Bernhardt Herzmarksky, the Viennese music publisher, is said to have realized \$750,000 profit from the sale of "The Merry Widow" scores.

De Wolf Hopper's great song hit in "The Pled Piper" is called "Nursery Rhymes," a take-off on the recent proposition to bring Mother Goose up-to-date.

Eugene Ormonde, who plays the role of Pietro Garvony, a political boss, in "The Unbroken Road," has been leading man with Mrs. Fluke, Lillian Russell, Ada Rehan, and Blanche Bates.

"The Unbroken Road," the title of Bertha Kalich's present play, means the road of conscience, unfettered by fear or prejudice, the road that every one must break for themselves through life.

Says Mrs. Murrish in "The Unbroken Road": "You can't put charity on a business basis, for then it isn't charity. Charity is individual; it comes from the heart. Why, you couldn't incorporate charity even in New Jersey."

Herr Franz Lehar, composer of "The Merry Widow," was formerly bandmaster of the Twenty-sixth Austrian Infantry. When the Viennese opera was first produced at Daly's Theater, London, Herr Lehar personally conducted the orchestra.

E. H. Sothern has had a remarkable season at the Salt Lake Theater, in Salt Lake City. His receipts for three nights broke the record. Mr. Sothern is on his way East, and will appear at the Belasco before going into New York for his Metropolitan run.

Mr. Walter Damrosch and his New York Symphony Orchestra, with a selected quartet, will be at the New National Theater Tuesday afternoon, April 13, at 4:30. This promises to be the biggest orchestral concert of the local season. Mr. T. Arthur Smith will direct the business department.

Harry Bulger, the musical comedian, late of the Savage comic opera, notably "Woodland," will play Chase's week after next. He will present his burlesque hit, "He Was a Soldier, Too," the song he sings by the same name being one of the biggest successes Mr. Bulger has ever launched.

Thomas Dickinson, author of "The Unbroken Road," is an authority on the Elizabethan drama. He is now editing a special edition of the life and works of Robert Greene, the pre-Shakespearean dramatist. Greene called Shakespeare a plagiarist and proved that the greatest dramatic writers for his comedies stole lines and situations from Greene's plays.

Thomas Dickinson, the author of "The Unbroken Road," says that badness is human and individual, and that goodness, if it is to counteract the forces of evil, must be as human and individual as the forces of badness. "The Unbroken Road," with its virile, appealing story, illustrates that it is the fault of the church, charity, and education that the higher ideals of the race have been too much institutionalized.

MANAGERS AND PLAYS.

Henry James' new play, "The High Bid," was brought out by Forbes Robertson in London last Thursday.

Frederic Thompson has bought a new force by Frank Ward O'Malley and Edward W. Townsend, for production next fall.

George Alexander revived "The Prisoner of Zenda" on February 15 in London. Stella Patrick Campbell appeared as Princess Flavia.

Edmund Day will supply Lillian Russell with her new play, called "The Widow's Mite," which Klaw & Erlanger and Joseph Brooks promise to give a big production.

When "Chanticleer" is brought out in Paris the leading part intended for the late Benoit Constant Coquelin will be played by M. Le Barsy, who has just been selected by Edmond Rostand for the role.

A revival of Henry Arthur Jones' play, "The Dancing Girl," was made by Beerbohm Tree at His Majesty's Theater, London, on February 11. Mr. Jones has rewritten the last act. Mr. Tree appeared as the Duke of Gusebury, and the name part was played by Alice Crawford.

Charles Frohman sailed for Europe on the Lusitania last Wednesday on his annual spring visit to London. He will be gone about six months. He will make arrangements for the American production of "An Englishman's Home," and is planning to acquire another London theater.

As Henry W. Savage has postponed until next fall the production of "The Love Cure," and as Henry B. Harris has likewise deferred "The Return of Eve" until the same date, it behooves several managers to hold off with some of their new undertakings until the general conditions improve and business becomes normal.

Word comes from the offices of Charles Frohman that, beginning Monday, March 8, the Sicilian Players, headed by Mimi Aguglia, will play a return New York engagement, appearing for four matinee weeks at the Criterion Theater. The first bill will be "Zaza," done in Italian. Mimi Aguglia will play the chief part in "Zaza." The Criterion Theater will be occupied during the balance of the week, Wednesday and Saturday matinee, and every evening, by Mario Dore and her company in "The Richest Girl."

Dr. Ludwig Wullner, the great German Heder singer, has come and conquered. Here, as elsewhere, he was immediately victorious. No success like that of Dr. Wullner, who will appear at the Columbia Theater next Tuesday afternoon in a second recital, has been scored in this country for years. David Bispham, our great American baritone, after hearing him, says "Wullner has a message for the people."

Washington is fortunate in securing a return date, and next Tuesday is positively the only date available, as Dr. Wullner's time is fully booked until the late spring; several wished to engage him for private appearances but were unable to secure a date, as he had to catch the 6:20 train after the recital on Wednesday to sing at Carnegie Hall, New York, on Thursday, from there to Boston for an appearance with the Boston Symphony Orchestra on Saturday.

Conrad Y. Box extraordinary piano accompaniment is a distinct feature of Dr. Wullner's recitals.

THIS WEEK'S PLAYBILLS.

The National—"The Merry Widow."
The "Merry Widow," with Henry W. Savage's original New York production intact, will be the attraction at the National for the current two weeks.

This is the brilliant organization concerned in the remarkable run of fifty-two weeks at the New Amsterdam Theater, when all records in the metropolis for attendance and receipts were broken.

All play-goers know the success scored by Lehar's alluring operetta was phenomenal in the extreme, but few realize that in that one year more than 700,000 New Yorkers, besides to the most delightful creature, that a sum in excess of \$1,000,000 was taken at the box office. Since then Chicago has applauded this brilliant creation of melody and mirth for 200 nights, Bostonians to the number of 250,000 have welcomed the special organization sent by Mr. Savage to "Paid in Full," and a dozen other important cities have rendered similar verdicts.

In addition to the complete roster of principals, choruses, &c., the forthcoming production has the advantage of Mr. Savage's notable band of 250 men, orchestra, that fine organization which won such favor during the past two or three seasons in Mr. Savage's productions of "Paid in Full" and "Madam Butterfly."

This body of instrumentalists will be supplemented by the original Teikaga Band, especially imported from Hungary for the metropolitan production, whose appearance in yet colorfully Magyar opera, and again in the rollicking scene at Maxine's attracted such attention.

At this day little need be said concerning the story of the many special features of this remarkable work, which is enough to recall that not only "The Merry Widow" with unparalleled enthusiasm, but that a similar verdict has been rendered by the press and the public. The "Merry Widow" even far from Japan and remote South Africa having fallen under the spell.

Among the players to be seen during the local engagement are Donald Brian, Robert E. Graham, Frank Evans, William C. Weston, F. J. McCarthy, Frances Cameron, Franceska Kaspar, Teresa Van Brune, Blanche Rice, and others of importance. The chorus is exceptionally large and beautiful. The orchestra, under the brilliant baton of the Marzovino fete and the frolic at Maxine's are among the most beautiful stage pictures we have.

The Columbia-Ministrels.

The Cohan and Harris Minstrels, which appear at the Columbia Theater next week, will present a minstrel star new to Washington. In fact, one with actually only two weeks' experience, but who has in that time scored one of his greatest successes in a career of many successes. Raymond Hitchcock, well known to all Washington theater-goers as one of its most popular and versatile comedians, has recently replaced George Evans, who has just returned from his recent operation for appendicitis. Mr. Hitchcock has been appearing with the company during the past two weeks in Boston, where he has met with much favor from both critics and public alike. It seems to be the consensus of opinion that Mr. Hitchcock as a negro minstrel is as much of a success as he was as Aladdin in the "Yankee Doodle" show. This is Mr. Hitchcock's first appearance as a blackface comedian, he has been voted a winner in this line of work at several of the Lamb's gambols, and a clubhouse, in New York. This is a doubtful feat, for he has to undertake his new job when suddenly called upon by Messrs. Cohan and Harris to do the George Evans comic make-up and become a minstrel. To the minstrel with burr and wit, to the minstrel who would appear an easy task for a man of Mr. Hitchcock's stage experience, but it is a hardest task I ever tackled, this making up with only the eyes and mouth to help me. Nothing that Mr. Evans did to create a laugh has been all-stepped by Mr. Hitchcock, who has all Mr. Evans' success, wears his clothes as Mr. Evans wore them, and even tackled the honey boy's monologue stuff. It is in the afterpiece, "The Belle of the Barbary Coast," that Mr. Hitchcock, as Kilt Jones, the tough bootblack, has to make a number of things to do. To the minstrel who would appear an easy task for a man of Mr. Hitchcock's stage experience, but it is a hardest task I ever tackled, this making up with only the eyes and mouth to help me. 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